

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Futility of Existence in Harold Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*

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Abstract

The Dumb Waiter deals with Pinter's idea that human existence is futile because we are living in an irrational, meaningless and purposeless universe. So, he presents the main characters engaging themselves in irrational and aimless activities which most probably represent the true nature of human condition and being in this absurd world. Similarly, he also shows them speaking nonsense, illogical, incoherent, repetitive and circular dialogues to match the incoherence and disorder of the universe. Further, his setting is dingy, shabby and shows disarranged situations to reflect the disharmony and incoherent condition of the world. The play ends with no proper closure to show the indefinite nature of things.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

This is a study of the futility of existence in an irrational and meaningless world shown through useless activities, foolish talks and circular and repetitive dialogue of Ben and Gus as well as the minimal setting in Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter*. The hypothesis of this is that through these unintelligible characters, nonsense dialogues and minimal setting Pinter has depicted meaninglessness of existence. In the play, Ben and Gus perform irrational actions, talk foolishly, speak and use the same sentences and ideas repeatedly. In the same way, the setting is also presented as very shabby, minimal and static. All these show that the human condition is irrational, meaningless and purposeless, or absurd.

Pinter in the play has intentionally displayed the main characters Ben and Gus engaging themselves in futile deeds, expressing nonsense speeches, uttering and implying the same dialogues repetitively in the static, dingy and microcosmic space and time. So, this research analyzes the motive/purpose behind such presentation.

According to *Webster's New College Dictionary*, 'futility' refers to 'failure', uselessness, vanity, vigourlessness, purposelessness (576). Similarly, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines 'futility' as 'pointlessness, purposelessness (634). Further, 'futility' as per *Webster's New International Dictionary*, 'is derived from the Latin word – 'futilitas' that means 'quality of producing no effect, uselessness, frivolousness (1023).

The feeling of futility occurs when our actions have no purpose. When we do something repeatedly, we have the sense of futility because it has no importance to us. Similarly, when somebody talks nonsense, his talk is futile. When we do work without any purpose, it is also useless.

According to the *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, existence is derived from the two Latin words – 'ex and sistere'. In the Latin language, 'ex and sistere' means 'step forth, emerge'. It also says that existence stands in contrast to essence (163). Likewise, *Webster's New World College Dictionary* defines existence as the act of existing, or state or fact of being (498). In the same way, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* says existence is 'the state or fact of being real or living or of being present' (532). For Weiss, existence is one of the four modes of being, standing alongside actuality, ideality and God (163). One of the leading existentialist figures Sartre says: "existence precedes essence" (13). According to Kierkegaard existence is not just 'being there' but living passionately, choosing one's own existence and committing oneself to a certain way of life (224). According to *Dictionary of Philosophy*, existence is the main subject matter of metaphysics, especially ontology (141). Karl Jaspers brings the German word 'existenz' which means genuinely oneself and making sense of one's life (218). Martin Heidegger says: "Human existence is always a projecting of oneself into the future it is any moment being essentially 'on the way' from what we were and sought to be, towards what we will be" (184).

The sense of existence occurs due to consciousness. So, only man exists whereas animal and plant only live because they have no consciousness. So, there is a difference between existence and living. Therefore, existence is the conscious feeling sense of being or being present or living in the world. Moreover, when we encounter with difficulties bravely and boldly, only then we are supposed to exist. But if we give in to the problems then we cannot exist because we must struggle to exist. According to existentialist thinkers, to exist means to live by making choices. They believe that our life is meaningless since the universe in which we live itself is purposeless. That's why; we ourselves must choose and give value to life. Only then, we can feel that we really live as beings present in the world.

The Dumb Waiter is a one act play which consists of two gunmen, Ben and Gus as characters. They do useless things. Further, they talk irrationally. They discuss on irrelevant and trivial topics. They express and imply the same sentences repetitively. Ben acts like a clown or caricaturist while talking in the speaking tube. Similarly, they are staying in a dingy and shabby basement room attached to the kitchen and the bathroom. All these show they are unmotivated and unintelligible characters. Their situation is static and dingy. Their actions have no purpose. Their dialogues have no logical coherence or sequence. Rather, the setting and their dialogues and activities seem to be a complex pattern of poetic images. Pinter has displayed such acts, dialogues and situations in the play to suit the true condition of human existence. Martin Esslin says that the

so-called traditional realistic dramatists cannot depict the reality by using rational and coherent dialogues, logical development of the plot, motivated and intelligent characters, intentional and meaningful deeds, dynamic and macrocosmic setting because the world itself is irrational, purposeless, foolish, disordered and meaningless. In this way, the universe has no meaning or value whereas conventional playwrights through the well-made plays tried to convey that the world has meaning, which is most untrue. On the other hand, the absurdist playwrights by creating comical, nonsense and farcical plays have reached the nearest to the fact that the universe is nonsensical, irrational and meaningless. So is human existence futile and purposeless. Moreover, realistic dramatists with the help of the well-made plays try to affirm that the universe has absolute truth or value. Though we must die, our life has meaning. Therefore, our actions and creations have no value or significance. But William I. Over says the playwrights of the *Theatre of the Absurd* have shown that our existence is futile. Since all our creations are doomed to decay as we are doomed to death (4). Thus, it seems that the absurdist dramatists are the most real as they present the truest nature of the universe.

In the play, they are waiting for a kill order. But the victim does not arrive in time. So, they do things completely nonsensical and purposeless to pass the time. Ben reads the newspaper. Gus moves around and takes out a matchbox and a packet of cigarettes from his shoes. Ben reads news about an old man of 87 years committing suicide by going under a moving truck. Gus says that Saturday comes after Friday. Then, an envelope glides

in through the door. Gus finds 12 matches inside the envelope. There is not written even a single word on the envelope. Gus goes out to look for the postman but finds nobody. Then, they discuss which team is playing away. Similarly, they quarrel over whether it is correct to say 'light the kettle or light the gas' like children. After some time the gas goes out because the gas meter has no balance. So, they have to wait Wilson, the owner of the house for money to fill the gas. But Gus views that Wilson may not come. Meanwhile, a dumb waiter comes down from the upstairs with an order of complicated food. They send up things. Some of them are decayed. Ben finds the speaking tube and takes it to mouth to speak and to ear to hear alternately and repeatedly. Ben gives directions to Gus and Gus reads them. Gus says he (unknown) is playing games with them but does not know the reasons behind this game. At last, Gus goes out to drink a glass of water. Only then Ben gets kill order. Then Gus gets in and Ben turns his revolver to him. They stare at each other for a long time.

The Dumb Waiter has received both hostile and favorable criticism and reviews since its publication. So, it has been analyzed through various perspectives. Below are given the commentaries of some critics.

Austin E. Quigley writes about the recurring stares between Gus and Ben in the play. He states that one of the obvious functions of the stares is that they show the confusion of Ben and Gus when they are in disturbing situations. Moreover, this point has two meanings. One is that their relationship is cold for some time and another indication is that their stares are frequently mutual and friendly especially in the final tableau (3).

On the other hand, Martin Esslin remarks that *The Dumb Waiter* , has fulfilled the plan of Ionesco who wanted to fuse tragedy with farce. He further says it has been also successful in changing the mysterious supernatural element into an additional element of comedy. So, he states in detail in this way:

The Dumb Waiter brilliantly fulfills Ionesco's postulate in completely fusing tragedy with the most hilarious farce. It also succeeds in turning the mysterious supernatural ingredient, which was merely sentimental in *The Room*; into an additional element of comedy: the spectacle of the heavenly powers bombarding two solemn gunmen with demand for maccaroni, pastitsio . . . and beans sprouts is wildly funny. Yet the main element of comedy is provided by the brilliant small talk behind which two men hide their growing anxiety. These discussions of which football team is playing away on that particular Saturday, whether it is correct to say 'light the kettle or light the gas,' the desultory discussions of trivial news in the newspaper are utterly true, widely comic, and terrifying in their absurdity." (238-39).

Likewise, R.A. Buck analyzes the text from the linguistic point of view .He talks about the power of linguistic ambiguity at the end of the play. Towards the end of the play, Gus goes out to drink a glass of water through the left door. Ben also goes to the left door to call Gus. Meanwhile, the right door opens and Gus 'stumbles in' and Ben turns his

revolver to Gus. But the play just says that Gus 'stumbles in' but it is not clear through which door Gus gets in. so, Buck says we can go on guessing which door Gus enters but can never be certain. (45)

Charles A. Carpenter does not take the play seriously. So, he gives a hostile type of review. So, he calls the play a 'mock-melodramatic farce' and indicates that it is a kind of fun on Pinter (qtd. in *The Dumb Waiter : Pinter's Play with the Audience*).

Penelope Prentice annotates about the sympathetic situation of Ben and Gus. He says they receive sympathy from the audience when the play discloses the power of the unseen villain. He says: "The audience is led to sympathy for one hired killer, Gus and indeed, quite subtly to sympathy for both, as the play demystifies the power of the seeming villain as bluff coupled with inertia of motion. Once set in action, both characters remain in action, dramatizing also the partial responsibility of the seeming victim to know what is happening in order to overcome inertia and to act to prevent his own destruction (11)."

Thomes F Van Laan comments about the process of 'filling in' in *The Dumb Waiter* . He says that the play has no tied-up ending like in the traditional play. So, while reading the play if we try to look for the proper ending or the missing element, we just keep up adding but it can't be exact. That's why, we just go on 'filling in' (495).

Andrew Kennedy opines about the language of the play. He says that when Ben and Gus talk to each other, the dialogue between them becomes a sharper pattern because of its inconsequentiality. Similarly,

when Ben speaks to the speaking tube, he looks as if he is performing a parodical ritual. He further states that Pinter has used quasiritualistic pattern in the play repeatedly to give a rhythmic intensity to the climatic scene. Yet the rhythms of ritual – responses, catechismistic cross examination, litanies (players) are used parodically or playfully to dehumanize speech (67-68).

Thus, many critics have interpreted this play through different angles. Many of them have read the play from the linguistic point of view. Some talk about the stares and pitiable situations of Ben and Gus. Similarly, the form of the play is also discussed. Though some critics have expressed the absurdist view of the play, it still remains incomplete. That's why it is still relevant to research this issue.

The two characters Ben and Gus are waiting for the kill order. While waiting, the victim does not come on time. So, they are presented doing completely useless and foolish things to kill the time Ben reads the newspaper whereas Gus Just moves without any purpose. Further, Gus takes out a matchbox and a packet of Cigarette from his shoes. It shows that Gus has put them inside his shoes. So, Gus' keeping the matchbox and the packet of the cigarette inside the shoes is a completely foolish act because we generally keep the matchbox either in a pocket or somewhere in the kitchen and the packet of the cigarette in our pocket. Likewise, Ben reads news that an old man of 87 years committed suicide by going under the moving truck. It tells us that the old man already heading towards the mouth of death is compelled to kill himself since he understood that

human condition is essentially futile. Then, Gus says that Saturday comes/occurs/falls after Friday. It is a general truth everybody knows. Rather, it sounds like a daily formal conversation which has no purpose but just to fill the space between people. In the middle of the play, an envelope comes in under the door. Gus picks it up and looks inside. He finds out 12 matches but it is a matter of surprise that even a single word is not written on the envelope. So, according to the instruction of Ben, Gus goes out to see the person who has delivered/sent the latter but Gus sees nobody. It very obviously indicates that Gus and Ben both went to know the absolute truth or the creator but can't find it because the world itself has no creator or ultimate truth. While Ben and Gus are going to make tea, they discuss over a trivial matter saying whether it is correct to say light the gas or light the kettle. These two quarrel about a trifling topic clearly displaying the foolishness and irrationality of human beings and their condition. Then, after some time, the gas goes out because the gas meter has no balance. Both are penniless. So, they have to wait for Wilson so called the owner of the house for money. But Gus thinks that Wilson may not come since he mostly does not come. Even in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* too Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot but he does not come. The parallels are obvious. Exactly in the same way, Ben and Gus can be compared with Vladimir and Estragon. That's why, it is trying to say that there is nobody in the universe to come and help human beings. So, it is useless for us to wait for him. In the meantime, Gus tells Ben what Ben can do is just wait for him. It indirectly tells us what man can do is just to

wait him as Vladimir and Estragon, and Ben and Gus do in *Waiting for Godot* and *The Dumb Waiter* respectively. Then a dumb waiter descends from the upstairs. He has brought down an order of complicated food even Ben and Gus do not understand. It presents the breakdown of language among people. It is impossible to try to communicate among human beings. At first, *The Dumb Waiter* goes up without taking food. It indicates that man in his life does hard work and collects riches but when he dies, he takes nothing up. Gus also asks Ben who the owner of the house is but Ben can not reply it. It is also an indication that the world has no master or ultimate truth. After some time, they complain that things they sent have decayed. This refers to the idea of absurdist playwrights and thinkers that everything in the world is doomed to decay as we ourselves are doomed to death. Similarly, when Ben speaks to the speaking tube, he takes it to the mouth to speak and to the ear to hear alternatively and repeatedly. In this scene, if we try to visualize while reading, Ben looks like a clown or caricaturist or a fool. Then, Ben instructs Gus and Gus follows them. When Gus repeats Ben's directions, it sounds so ridiculous, parodical, farcical and monotonous that it gets entirely insignificant. As a result, it conveys us the sense of absurdity. Towards the end the play, Gus states that he (unknown) is playing games with them but does not know the reasons behind this game. It perhaps shows that the world is beyond man's knowledge or comprehension due to its infinity. Towards the end of the play, Gus goes outside to have a glass of water through the left door. Then Ben gets the order to kill the man

because he has arrived. Then he goes towards the door to call Gus. Meanwhile, the right door opens and Ben turns his revolver at the right door. Then the play just says Gus 'stumbles in' but it is not clear through which door Gus gets in. So, we can just keep guessing which door he enters but cannot be sure. So, we just go on looking for the exact answer as we have been looking for the ultimate truth in the world. Likewise, the closure of the play is also expandable. The play ends when Ben and Gus stare at each other which is a very unconventional ending. So, there is something missing in the play. Therefore, if we endeavor to look for a logical ending, we just go on seeking it but can never be exact. So, we go on searching for the tied-up ending as we have been seeking the absolute truth in the world.

Thus, *The Dumb Waiter* is a one act play which has portrayed the true condition of human beings and true nature of the universe through futile activities, circular and repeated dialogues and the minimal setting in the play. And to prove this, the work will further study theoretical discourse on existentialism and the Theatre of the Absurd.

Chapter II

EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism is a literary and philosophical movement that interprets human existence. It believes that human being is an isolated existent in an alien universe. It also focuses on an individual and his relationship to the universe. Further it opposes the traditional belief which sees truth as objective and universal. According to this philosophy, truths are subjective. So what is true to one may be false to another. Whether a thing is true or false, it depends on the decision the individual makes. Thus it emphasizes on individual choice and freedom.

At first, People lost religious faith due to the enlightenment. As a result, Nietzsche announced the death of God in the 12th century. Similarly, the horrors of the First World War caused man to abandon faith in social progress. Many more people predicted the hope of radical social revolutions but Stalin changed the Soviet Union into a totalitarian tyranny. As a consequence, people no more believed in them. Likewise, during the Second World War, barbarism, mass murder and genocide compelled man to lose the faith. So, the horrific situation of the wars evoked the sense of despair, alienation, anxiety, frustration, loneliness and helplessness. Spiritual emptiness spread in rich societies of Western Europe and the United States. As a result, people's formerly held certainties collapsed. Then, for man the world lost its meaning and stopped making sense. These resulted in man finding himself thrown in a universe that is frightening, illogical, incoherent, disordered, chaotic, irrational or in a word 'absurd.'

In such conditions, the belief in concepts like unity, morality, value, rationality, logicality, absolute truth and Christianity was shattered. This realization gave rise to the idea that human existence is meaningless. However, existentialist philosophers think they can exist in the world by creating meaning with the help of choice. Thus they believe that they can create value for their lives by making choices. Existentialism as a mode of thought believes that man has to choose and create meaning for his own existence in the world. So man is what he makes of himself. Man is free to do whatever he wants and responsible for whatever he makes. Thus existentialism talks about individual existence, freedom and choice.

Existentialists showed the human condition more precisely and clearly than any other school of thought. Spiritual emptiness sense of insecurity and cosmic absurdity were depicted by the writers. Man was given an existence without essence. Further, he was entrapped by morality, fear, uncertainty. There was no 'super being' or 'transcendental absolute to help fulfill the needs of human life. So, Richard Tarnas states that existentialist thinkers concerned themselves with fundamental problems of human existence like-suffering, death, loneliness and dread, spiritual emptiness, sense of insecurity, cosmic absurdity, inability of human reason and tragic human condition (389).

Existentialists deny the existence of God. Nietzsche's announcement 'God is dead' influenced existential philosophy. Hence, the belief among atheist existentialists is that there is no God to determine our existence. First, we exist, then we create our essence ourselves. We are what we

make of ourselves. In that sense, we are in the state of becoming but not in the state of being. We are consciously choosing and creating ourselves because it is not possible for us to stay without choice. Even when we don't choose, we still choose by not choosing. In this context Macintyre say: "Even if I do not choose I have chosen not to choose." (149)

Existentialism is closely related with phenomenology which is a philosophical perspective and method established by German thinker Edmund Husserl. It emphasizes on the self or subjectivism. It studies human consciousness. The world is as it appears to us. So, it means it lays emphasis on subjectivism . Husserl talks about phenomenology in this way:

Phenomenology itself learns its proper function of transparently human living from an entire relationship 'self' [...]. Phenomenology is not less than man's whole occupation with himself in the service of the universal reason. (15)

Thus phenomenology stresses individuality and subjectivism. It rejects the idea of the objective. There is no absolute thing in the world. Things are as they appear to us/our senses.

The major themes of existentialism are existence, alienation, frustration, loneliness, anxiety, dread, awareness of death, suicide etc. Existentialist philosophers think that man is conscious and because of the consciousness he feels tragic, miserable, and lonely in the world

Friedrich Nietzsche, a German philosopher has criticized Western philosophy and Christianity. According to him, Western philosophy and

Christianity both were corrupt since they taught abstractions. The Western education system tries to prepare the historically educated/learned man but historical knowledge doesn't serve life, rather it corrupts life. Then, people become purposeless. Such knowledge cannot provide happiness to people because they become like pendulum in the chain of history whereas man has to face the present for happiness. For Nietzsche the education should be for the sake of human life and existence. In his essay, *On the Use and Abuse of History* he says that we need education for life and action, not for a comfortable turning away from life and action or merely for glossing over the egoistical life and the cowardly bad act. According to him, history is useful only in so far as it serves living. (152)

He also doesn't believe in the thought of absolute truth that controls an individual. Man is the product of his own action from his choice. Since, God is dead, there is nobody to govern an individual. So, he is the master of himself. For Nietzsche, as Mautner comments in the *Dictionary of Philosophy*: "No moment is more important than the present in which one has the opportunity to make active choice that influence the character of the whole" (292).

He also denounces the existence of God and further says even if there is God, he is dead. Therefore, there is nobody to determine our existence. He also calls Christianity a shelter only for the weak, sick and disabled and at the same time it possesses a slave morality. (912)

Nietzsche seems to be quite positive towards suicide because it is also one of the choices an individual makes. He takes the suicide is as a

solution in some way.. So, suicide is not surrender but a means to achieve goals. It also makes fulfillment. Thus he takes it positively.

Jean Paul Sartre emphasizes on individual freedom and responsibility. Robert Soloman says: “The central tenet of Sartre’s existentialism is the freedom of human consciousness, freedom to act, freedom to value and freedom to make itself”(86).

He also agrees “Existence precedes the essence” In accordance with Sartre, we first exist, appear on the scene, make choice/choose and create ourselves. It means we make ourselves what to be only after we exist. We create meaning in our life by making choices.

He also thinks that God doesn’t exist but he opines that if there is God, he is useless. To support this idea, he states that existentialism isn’t so aesthetic that it wears itself out showing that God doesn’t exist. Rather, it declares that even if God did exist, that would change nothing” (51).

Though he frequently talks about freedom, his view towards it is negative. He supposes freedom as a curse but not as a boon For him, man is condemned to be free(56) because one has to choose the route of life, he is responsible for his actions in life So, life is determined by choice a person makes.

According to him there is no predetermining essence but one creates essence by choosing. So, existence is primary. He argues that existence and freedom go together. For Sartre, “freedom is existence and in it

existence proceeds essence “ (66). When he talks about freedom, he also states individual freedom relies upon the freedom of others. (46)

In this way, like most of the existentialists Sartre focuses on freedom of choice and personal responsibility conveying that there is no absolute power to control a man.

Albert Camus was the first to use the term 'absurd' to show the condition of Sisyphus. 'Absurd' means useless, futile, illogical, unreasonable, insignificant, valueless, meaningless, irrational, incongruous etc'. In a musical context, it originally means 'out of harmony.' Similarly, it may simply mean 'ridiculous' in common use. But this is not the sense in which Camus and Esslin used the term ' Likewise, Sorer Kierkegaard used the term saying that Christianity was irrational and even absurd (141). Later, it appeared in 'literature' as 'Literature of the Absurd'. After that this term/phrase began to be applied to refer to a number of works in drama and prose fiction that have commonly the theme/sense that the human condition is essentially absurd. After the Second World War, it emerged as a revolt against strong belief and values of traditional culture and literature. In fact, earlier people assumed that human beings as completely rational creatures who lived in at least partially intelligible universe and are part of an ordered social structure and may be capable of bravery and dignity even in defeat (1).

In most of Camus' works, he expresses the central idea that human existence is absurd. He also believes that man is free to give meaning to life. But when he makes choices, his choices lead to repetition and the

repetition leads to the sense of absurdity. According to Camus, Sisyphus was given repetitive work that would remain forever a punishment because Sisyphus revolted against the gods. The task was that he had to roll a rock up the mountain top again and again because it rolls down to the bottom of the mountain. It was such a repetitive and purposeless work that created a sense of absurdity. In the same way people also do things repeatedly and purposelessly as Sisyphus does. So, Camus came to realize a parallel between man's condition and Sisyphus' condition (66-67). He also has the sense that man chooses to exist give meaning/value to life. When he chooses, he makes repetition of things. Then, the repetition rouses the sense of consciousness and consciousness leads to the sense of absurdity.

Camus argues that the human condition is absurd. So, his search for purpose in the world is meaningless because the world has no meaning, value or ultimate truth. In this regard, M.H. Abram referring to Camus says that human being is an isolated existent who is thrown into a strange world. He believes that the universe doesn't possess inherent truth, value or meaning. Human life moves from nothingness and moves toward nothingness. So, human existence is both anguished and absurd (1). Likewise, alluding Camus he says the universe has no secrets or truth similarly, man feels strange in the world. In this regard, he quotes from the *Myth of Sisyphus* in this way:

In a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels strange. His is an irremediable exile . . . this

divorce between man and his life the actor and his setting truly constitute the feeling of absurdity. (1)

According to him, the universe is unknowable and uncertain.

Though we try to understand the ultimate truth, through science, philosophy, religion or mathematics, it is inaccessible. So, it is absurd to search for the absolute truth(25).It means that human reason can't comprehend the universe properly. He further says that man tries to get something which is irrational. So, there is clash between human need and the unreasonable science of the world (reason) which gives birth to absurdity Likewise, 'Absurdity; springs from the comparison between a bare fact and a certain reality; action and the world that transcends it as well as from their conformation. That's why, absurd is essentially a divorce (32-33).Moreover, the absurd is constant encounter between man and his own obscurity (3).The absurd makes everything really free. In search for freedom, man creates different things that confine his own life. So, being free he is not really free. The absurd enlightens him because he knows there is no future for man and it gives inner freedom to him. It also indicates that he takes the absurd positively and opines that it helps us lead a real life. By accepting death, the absurd man feels released from everything outside. Death and the absurd are principles of the only reasonable freedom which a human heart can experience and live. So, what is important is not the best thing but the most living. The absurd and the extra life don't depend on man's will but on its death. So, death is the source of absurdity (59-61).

Camus says that man who by accepting the absurd does nothing for the eternal is the absurd man. He possesses the nostalgia. He likes his courage and reasoning. Courage teaches him to live without appeal and proceed with what he has. On the other hand, his reasoning informs him of his limitations. He can accept that one is not separated from God and the commandment; however he lives outside that god. He sees nothing in them but justifications and at the same time he has nothing to justify. So the absurd does not liberate but binds (64-66). This shows that an absurd man is both courageous and reasonable and can live a happy life due to awareness of his situations..

Likewise, Camus talks about repetition by alluding to Don Juan's story. Don Juan goes from one woman to another for more satisfaction but he loves them with the same passion and each time with his whole self that he must repeat his gift and profound quest. Then, he gets the same type of satisfaction, nothing more than it (66-67).

Camus says that all existence for a man who turned away from eternal/death is a vast mime under the mask of the absurd. So, creation is a great mime. The work of art is also a kind of creation which is very monotonous. However, the creation is not the end, the meaning and the consolation of life because creating or not creating changes nothing. Therefore, creation itself is absurd (91). People work and create for nothing. People know that creation has no future. The absurd negates everything on the hand and glorifies them on the other. Because of absurd creation, man got revolt, freedom and diversity but later they will show

their sheer futility (105-106). Thus, he thinks that creation itself is absurd because it doesn't bring any change in our life.

Edmund Husserl says the universe is full of contradictions and nonsense. So it is a vast irrational (31). Simon du Plock in *Albert Camus Existentialist or Absurdist?* states that Camus might more properly be supposed an absurdist than existentialist. Plock differentiates Camus from Sartre. He says Camus used the term 'absurdity' to refer to the human condition whereas Sartre used 'nausea' to denote it. Camus views the denial of world to fulfill the desire of man. When man has high expectation but the world doesn't respond to them, then the absurd occurs (15).

Martin Heidegger says human existence is foolish and irrational. Man is lost in the universe. Likewise, the consciousness of death is the main source of anxiety, and absurdity (28-29).

Bree agrees with Camus and says that the universe is incomprehensible because it is beyond human being's reason. So he is a stranger to himself as well as to the world (202-203).

Martin Esslin talks about different kinds of meanings of absurd. According to him, it originally means 'out of harmony in a musical context. So, its dictionary meaning is 'out of harmony with reason or propriety, incongruous, unreasonable, illogical. But it may simply mean 'ridiculous' in common use. However, it is not the sense in which Albert Camus uses the word (23).

Esslin says that the *Theatre of the Absurd* can be taken as a new combination of a number of ancient, even archaic traditions of literature and drama. The ancient traditions have been brought together in a new form in the *Theatre of the Absurd*. *The Theater of the Absurd* has roots in the *mimus* of Greece and Rome. There was the tradition of miming and clowning. Similarly, the *commedia dell arte* of Renaissance Italy also became a component of the movement known as the *Theatre of the Absurd*. Likewise, popular forms of theatre-the *pantomime*, the musical hall in Britain also contributed to it. The ancient convention of nonsense poetry also supported it to rise. In Greece and Rome, there was the tradition of dream and nightmare literature which gave rise to this new type of theatre. Moreover, the allegorical and symbolic dramas of the medieval period known as the morality plays provided this movement with plenty of nourishment. It has also developed from the Spanish "auto sacramental". In the same way, this anti-theatre movement has originated from the ancient tradition of fools and mad scenes in dramas of Shakespeare and other playwrights. Further, the more tradition of ritual drama also contributed to this theatre.

For Esslin, the Theatre of the Absurd tries to make man aware of the ultimate realities of his condition. It also attempts to put back again in man the lost sense of cosmic wonder, to take him out of an existence which has become mechanical, trite (dull), complacent and deprived of dignity. It is a part of the ceaseless endeavor of artists of their time to destroy the wall of complacency and automatism. It also makes an attempt

to reestablish consciousness of man's own situation when he is confronted with the ultimate reality of his condition. So it fulfills a dual purpose and presents a two fold absurdity (400). This obviously shows that it tries to make man aware of ultimate realities of his condition by breaking the wall of complacency and automatism. Similarly, it also brings back the consciousness in man in order to face the harsh realities of life.

Esslin says that though the Theatre of the Absurd appears to be grotesque, frivolous and irreverent, it performs the original and religious function of the theatre since it deals with the ultimate realities of the human condition, fundamental problems of life and death and breakdown of communication (402). Here, he thinks that the Theatre of the Absurd is a symbolic religion that deals with man's fundamental problems of life. Likewise Richard L Peck states that the central idea of the theatre of the absurd is that if we break traditional views by abandoning logic and meaning, we can know the truth. (4)

Moreover, Esslin states that the Theatre of the Absurd shows the audience with a picture of a disordered world that has lost its meaning and purpose called "an absurd world". The Theatre of the Absurd shows the madness of the human condition and enables the audience to see his situation of grimness and despair. So, it works as a therapy. Then, he will be out of illusions, fears and anxieties. As a result, he can face the harsh realities of the world consciously (414).

According to Esslin, the Theatre of the Absurd expresses modern man's hard effort to accept the world where he lives. It also tries to make

him encounter human condition as it really is. At the same time, it endeavors to free him from illusions that cause maladjustment and disappointment. Man in the world attempts to endure the loss of faith and moral certainties through mass entertainment, shallow material satisfaction, false explanation of reality and ideologies. However, the dignity of man lies in his ability to face the reality in all its meaninglessness, accept it freely, fearlessly, consciously and to laugh at it (429).

Martin Esslin says that absurdist playwrights regard themselves as lonely outsiders who being cut off and isolated from society live in their own personal world. Each of them deal with both subject matter and form in individual manner. All of them also discuss over his own roots, sources and background in their personal ways.

After that Esslin discusses the themes of the absurd plays. The plays of absurdist playwright are concerned with the sense of metaphysical anguish at absurdity of the human condition, meaninglessness of life and the inevitable devaluation of ideals, purity and aim. The absurdist playwrights utter the sense of absurdity through irrational and illogical techniques and presentation (24). This view clearly says that absurdist playwrights express reality better by violating traditional norms of drama.

Oliver says that the Theatre of the Absurd talks about the stylistics aspect of plays without emphasizing the philosophical side (genus).:He states:

Perhaps the most serious critical limitations of Mr. Esslin's otherwise excellent work, the Theatre of the Absurd is precisely this tendency to focus too quietly and exclusively on the stylistic breed worth stressing the philosophical genus.

(3)

Esslin opines that many of absurd plays from the beginning have circular structure and ending. The absurdist playwrights also say that it is impossible to motivate all human behavior. So, the audience in the absurd plays faces such actions or incidents which have no motivation, such characters that are constantly moving and mostly such events which are irrational. Similarly, what's going to happen next cannot be predicted in such plays because like in traditional plays the action doesn't go logically and chronologically, rather it slowly develops a complex pattern of the poetic images (416). It indicates that it is not possible to motivate all human nature. So, they present unmotivated characters and irrational actions which create a pattern of poetic images.

The plays of the Theatre of the Absurd present such dialogues that seem to be only meaningless babble. The traditional play has a beginning middle and neatly tied up ending but the absurd play mostly starts arbitrarily and ends arbitrarily. Because of these qualities/attributes, the absurd play does not deserve the name of drama. Similarly the absurd plays don't intend to tell a story, don't want the audience to go home satisfied that they have known the solution to the problem shown in the play. Rather, they have to find out what they plan to convey. The absurdist

playwrights don't desire to discuss any theories or motives behind their work. They simply say that they express their vision of the world as best they can because being artists they feel an irrepressible need to do so (7-8).

Further Esslin views communication through language. Our conversation stops making sense among people. What makes sense at one moment becomes at the next an obscure babble of voices in a foreign language. So, such a sense of loss of meaning is an attack on the communication of meaning, that is the 'language'. The conversation which at one moment seems to be an exchange of information, at the next moment becomes only an exchange of meaningless banalities. People seem to be only using language to fill the space between them. They seem to be using language to conceal the fact that they don't desire to tell each other about anything real. As a consequence, language being a noble means of genuine communication has become a kind of rock filling empty spaces. This universe seems to be devoid of meaning, great and logical philosophy or politics tries to explain the truth of the world but they appear as empty chatter. So, our daily conversation is greatly devoid of logic and sense. It is at this point that the theatre of the Absurd displays the highest degree of reality (14). This very idea hints that our conversation itself is meaningless. Similarly, great and logical philosophy or politics which tries to reach the absolute truth seems to be only empty chatter. So, it is useless to try to reach the ultimate truth through logical language.

Eugene Ionesco an absurdist playwright and theorist offers us the meaning of 'Absurd' thus: "Absurd" is that which is devoid of purpose cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost, all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless" (23). Further he says that people are involved in futile activities. So, they are foolish and ridiculous. As a consequence, their sufferings look tragic because of mockery (1).

According to *The Encyclopedia America* he believes only absurd and anti-real plays can precisely reflect the mechanical nature of modern civilization and the futility of most human acts (348). William H. Harris and Judith S. Leaves in *The New Columbia Encyclopedia* also say that Ionesco's works express the futility of human endeavor in a universe ruled by chance (1357). This idea tells us that he is mainly concerned with reflecting the futile condition of human beings in this universe.

Similarly, he also talks about the poetic image which is complex, ambiguous, multidimensional, multi-meaningful. He believes words are meaningless and all communication among human beings is impossible(128). So, interpretation is useless because we can't give the exact meaning. That's why it consists of the theme of incomprehensibility of a life's experience. As a result, it dramatizes the futility and failure of human existence (151). He opposes the elegant, logical construction of the well-made play, rather he demands for intensity, the gradual growth of psychological tensions. To bring this about the author does not have to follow rules or restrictions (190-91). In this way, he is against the standards of traditional play.

Similarly, like Martin Esslin, William I. Oliver also discusses about absurdity and absurdist playwrights. He says absurdist playwrights believe that our existence is absurd because we are born without asking to be born, we die without seeking death and live between birth and death trapped within our body and reason. We have our senses, will and reason but can never perceive anything completely (4). Oliver states that all our creations are doomed to decay as we ourselves are destined to death. We create in order to see ourselves in some form of eternity but our creations become autonomous because of repetition. However, we can't find out it. So, the more we make efforts at definition and permanent distinction, the more we feel absurd. So, the only truth we have to accept is that we don't understand our life completely. Our sense of power, permanence and distinction is achieved when we give up reason. It is impossible for us to act efficiently, perceive accurately, create anything definitely and permanently. It is also impossible for us to stop acting as long as we live in the world. This is the very condition of human being called 'absurd'.

He says the context of absurd drama remains very much the same but only the style will change. So, absurd drama is not new but as old as farce. In fact, farce and tragedy are the double masks of absurdity. The absurdist dramatists think that the subject of farce is like that of the tragedy's and their subject matter is the terrible or comical disclosure of man's absurdity, ignorance and impotence. The farce rouses laughter removes our sympathy away and frees our cruelty. But tragedy causes tears and awakens our sympathy. On the other hand, the absurdists of

today mix up the qualities of farce and tragedy they make us laugh at that which hurts us most and weep at that which is most foolish in our nature.

Oliver says the absurdist is a thinker who accepts that the human condition is absurd. So, he knows his own absurdity very well. He thinks that realization of the absurdity is important for people to live a life of reasonable expectation and to bear important responsibility. If one recognizes absurdity, he in his life knows what is right to do and wrong not to do. If man doesn't know absurdity he is a puppet who is being dangled on the strings of dogma and illusions. It is a bitter discovery for all men and at the same time the only judgment that will rightly evaluate man's power of perception, action and success. It is ironically also only ground upon which man's mind can stand secure (14). It clearly says that he takes the 'absurd' positively because it helps man live a reasonable life by abandoning unnecessary strings of dogmas and illusions. The absurdist is a social farce also. He tries to lead his audience to the logical inference of absurdity for their good. He has to inform the audience that they must encounter the absurdity of their own existence so that they can be bold and courageous to face the difficulties of life. He has to show the audience the reasonable benefits of absurd living in order that people get convinced of giving up their bundles of dogmas illusions and superstitions. Likewise, the absurdist as a technician has to choose those devices which can convey his ideal and purpose indirectly. He can use expression, allegory or irony to express his ideas. In this way, the absurdist dramatist will search for such a form and style that first of all act as a disguise of his assertions

rather than a direct and complete expression. In the same way, the ideal absurdist will never present his opinions in symbols and action which implies that the encounter with the absurdity is a nihilistic experience (15).

In this way, after observing all these ideas of the absurdist thinkers, we come to know that they all lay emphasis on meaninglessness, futility, irrationality, disorder, illogicality, foolishness and purposelessness of the human condition and universe.

Chapter III

THE DUMB WAITER AS AN ABSURD PLAY

The Dumb Waiter is a one act play. Pinter has presented foolish characters, nonsensical and useless actions, repetitive and circular dialogues and dingy and shabby situations in the play. By staging such trivialities in the play he has successfully depicted the stark and harsh reality that human existence is essentially futile.

The play begins at a basement room where Ben and Gus are waiting for someone to come. There are two beds in the room and a serving hatch between their beds. The toilet and the kitchen are also attached to the quarter. It being a single room has two doors. The left door goes to the kitchen and the toilet whereas the right door leads to a passage. Their room on the ground floor indicates the insignificance of the human condition. Similarly, the serving hatch between their beds and the room attached to the kitchen and toilet tell us that the room is shabby and disorganized, which also refers to the disorder and incoherence of the world. The play describes the setting in this way:

A basement room. Two beds flat against the back wall. A Serving hatch, closed between the beds. A door to a passage right. Ben is lying on a bed, left reading a paper. Gus is sitting on a bed right, tying his shoelaces, with difficulty. Both are dressed in shirts trousers and braces." (1161)

The attached toilet and the kitchen refer to the triviality of human existence. Similarly, the two doors can be seen as the two eyes of man.

One of the doors goes to the kitchen and toilet showing incongruity. The other leads to the passage ahead. It is a way of telling us that our life moves ahead but reaches nowhere since it has no end/purpose. The two door room is grotesque.

Ben and Gus are two hired gunmen waiting for a kill order but the victim doesn't come in time. So, they perform nonsensical actions to kill time. So, Ben reads a newspaper while Gus ties his shoelaces as he moves around. Then, he unties his shoelaces takes off the shoes. After that, Gus takes out a matchbox and a packet of cigarette from the shoes. The fact that he has kept the matchbox and the packet of cigarette inside his shoes is completely irrational since we keep a match box and cigarette in a pocket. On this, Pinter says :

Ben lowers his paper and watches him. Gus kneels unties his shoelace and slowly takes off the shoe. He looks inside it and brings out a flattened matchbox...He kneels, unties his shoelace and slowly takes off the shoe. He looks inside it and brings out a flattened cigarette packet. He shakes it examines it. Their eyes meet. Ben rattles his paper and reads. Gus puts the paper in his pocket, bends down, puts on his shoe, and ties the lace."(1161)

Ben is a bad-tempered man who is very rude and dominating and also anxious because from time to time he slams down the newspaper and looks at Gus very angrily.

Likewise, Ben reads the news and tells Gus that an old man of 87 years killed himself by going under a moving truck. It is also an indication that the old man of 87 years who was already heading towards the mouth of death committed suicide perhaps because he knows the truth that the universe has no absolute truth or meaning. So, maybe he thought that it was futile to exist in a meaningless world. At first, Ben tells Gus that an old man of 87 years has killed himself by going under a moving truck. But after a while, Ben says: "He crawled under a lorry. A stationary lorry"(1162). This shows that the statement of Ben is nonsensical because no one can die by sliding under a fixed truck.

In the same way, Ben reads news that a female child of eight years killed a cat. But after some time they come to know that her elder brother of 11 years had killed it. Ben finds out the reality behind the cat's death and further says that a boy of 11 years witnessed the incident from the toolshed. So, what exactly happened ? Nothing is clear.

Similarly, when the tank takes a long time to be filled, Ben asks Gus why this has happened. Ben answers Gus it has happened so due to 'nothing'. As we are thrown into this world for no purpose, the tank also takes time to fill late because of no reason, or behind our creation the creator has no reason, exactly in the same manner, the tank being filled late has no 'cause'. In this context, Ben and Gus continue:

Gus: Have you noticed the time that tank takes to fill?

Ben: what tank?

Gus: In the lavatory.

Ben: No. Does it?

Gus: Terrible.

Ben: well, what about it?

Gus: What do you think's the matter with it?

Ben: Nothing.

Gus: Nothing? "(1162-63)

In the same way, Gus tells Ben that he didn't like the room since it has no window to look outside. A room that has no window is expected to be shabby, ugly and grotesque. Similarly, Gus tells Ben the room should have window to look outside. But Ben asks Gus why he needs window in the room. Ben's question is purposeless because Gus has already given him the answer for it. Thus, the conversation also appears to be meaningless and devoid of purpose.

Likewise, Gus states that Ben goes to work in darkness and goes away also in darkness. Gus describes about Ben's place only when it is dark. Perhaps, Pinter wants to disclose the miseries and incomprehensibility of life.

Furthermore, when Ben stopped the car in the middle of the road, Gus saw he was sitting up so straight as though he were waiting for somebody, Ben says that he was waiting for nobody. This response is something like that of Vladimir and Estragon in *'Waiting for God'*, he is waiting for someone who never comes because there is nobody in this universe to come and help human being.

Gus: I was, but I woke up when you stopped. You did stop, didn't you?

In the middle of the road .It was still dark, don't you remember? I looked out. It was all misty. I thought you wanted to kip, but you were sitting up dead straight, like you were waiting for someone.

Ben: I wasn't waiting for anything. (1163-64)

Gus again says Ben had stopped the car in the middle of the road. At that time also it was dark and completely misty. This statement obviously is saying that human life is full of pain and difficulties since the universe is frightening, unknowable and indifferent.

Moreover, when asked by Gus, Ben answers that he had stopped the car in the middle of road because they had been too early for the destination. But the reality was that they had started at the right time whereas he stated that they were too early. Pinter thus creates uncertainty.

Gus can't identify the place where they are staying. So, Gus asks Ben the name of the place. It is indeed ridiculous that Gus doesn't recognize the place where he lives, which shows man's alienation in the world. Similarly, a person who doesn't recognize his own place is supposed to be either mentally retarded or ridiculous. In this sense, he represents the true natures of the human condition as one of uncertainty. Gus says Saturday comes after Friday. It is an inane fact that doesn't need to be stated but is nothelen stated with no end except to fill the space between people.

Then, an envelope comes in through the door. According to Ben's order, Gus picks it up and finds out 12 matches. Not even a single word is inscribed on it. As per Ben's suggestion, Gun goes out to see the person who has delivered the envelope but finds none. This very apparently shows that Gus and Ben both want to know the ultimate truth or the creator but can't find it because the universe itself has no creator or truth. In this regard, Ben and Gus engage themselves like this:

Ben: Show it to me

Nothing on it. Not a word.

Gus: That's funny, isn't it?

Ben: It came under the door?

Gus: Must have done.

Ben: Well go on.

Gus: Go on where?

Ben: Open the door and see if you can catch anyone outside.

Gus: Who, me?

Ben: Go now!

Gus: No one.

(He replaces the revolver).

Ben: What did you see?

Gus: Nothing. "(1164-65)

Likewise, Pinter has used dashes in the middle of the sentences indicating breaks in sentence structure. He has applied such dashes to convey that life doesn't move smoothly because we have to face many

difficulties in our life. The following dialogue of Gus has three dashes in a single sentence.

Gus (tentatively): I thought perhaps you might know something.

(Ben looks at him)

I thought perhaps you- I mean- have you got and idea –who it's going to be tonight? " (1166)

Similarly, Gus seems to be too anxious or nervous because we stammer or pause in the middle of sentences while speaking due to nervousness or anxiety.

Similarly, they also dispute over a trivial matter. When Ben and Gus are going to make tea, they discuss over a trivial matter saying whether it is correct to say 'light the gas or light the kettle.' Thus, these two quarrel about a trifling topic. Therefore, these clearly display the foolishness and irrationality of the human being and his condition.

Then, sometime later the gas goes out because the gas meter has no balance. But they are penniless and they have to wait for Wilson the so-called owner/master of the house for money to fill the gas. At that moment, Gus says Wilson may not come since he mostly doesn't come. In Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot but he doesn't come. That's why there's no doubt similarity between Pinter's Wilson and Beckett's Godot. In the same manner, Ben and Gus can be compared with Vladimir and Estragon. It is therefore useless for man to wait for him.

Ben: I haven't got any money.

Gus: Nor have I.

Ben: You'll have to wait.

Gus: What for?

Ben: For Willson

Gus: He might not come. He might just send a message. He doesn't always come. "(1167)

Gus states that Ben has read the same paper many times. It indicates the repetitive and irritating action of Ben. Gus says :

Gus: That girl.

(Ben grabs the paper, which he reads.)

(Rising; looking down at Ben.)How many times have you read that paper?

(Ben slams the paper down and rises.)"(1167)

When they discuss about the girl, a dumb waiter comes down into the room. He has brought a list of order of food. Some of them are such complicated items that even Ben and Gus don't know about them at all. This presents the breakdown of language and consequently communication among people. It is impossible to try to communicate among people. When Gus asks Ben who the master of the building is Ben can't reply. The apparently meaning of their inability to identify the boss of house is man can't know the creator or the master of the world because the universe is masterless or godless.

When they prepare the things to send up the dumb waiter at first goes up without taking them up. This suggests that man in his life does hard work and collects riches but at last when he dies, he takes nothing . So, it is also absurd for man to endeavor to accumulate wealth. Likewise, Gus states that things only come down but nothing goes up and it has been going on like this for a long time. This idea is also an indication that it is foolish talk that says that man goes up to heaven after death. Rather, man is only pushed into the universe but won't be taken to heaven.

After some time, from the stairs they grumble that the food items they have sent up are decayed. This refers to the thought of the absurdist playwrights and philosophers that everything in the world is fated to decay as we ourselves are doomed to death. Then, Ben snatches the speaking tube from Gus and speaks to the upstairs like a caricaturist when Ben talks through the speaking tube, he puts in his mouth to talk and to ear to listen alternately and repeatedly. In this scene, if we visualize while reading that, Ben looks like a clown or caricaturist or a fool. This matches the real nature of the human condition and being. Ben talks to the tube like this:

Ben: (Listening): The biscuits were moldy

(He glares at Gus. Tube to mouth)

Well, we are sorry about that

(Tube to ear)

What?

(To mouth)

What?

(To ear)

Yes Yes

(To mouth)

Yes, Certainly. Right away. "(1171)

Similarly, they address the upstairs as sometimes 'he' and sometimes 'they'. These very pronouns 'they' and 'he' refer to the unknown person. These lines and action imply that the universe is incomprehensible because it is beyond man's reason. Ben directs Gus and Gus repeats. Then, when Gus rereads them, it sounds so ridiculous, parodical and farcical that it becomes completely trivial and insignificant. As a result, the sense of absurdity is created. Gus follows Ben thus

Ben: He won't know you're there.

Gus: He won't know you're there.

Ben: He won't know you're there.

Gus: He won't know I'm there."(1172)

In a similar speech pattern, Ben gives some instructions to Gus who reads them. When Gus reads them, again with same effect as in the previous instance to reveal the sense of futility. One example of repetition and circularity of the dialogue is as follows:

Ben: When the bloke come in-

Gus: When the bloke comes in-

Ben: Shut the door behind him.

Gus: Shut the door behind him

Thus, Gus repeats the same sentences like we repeat our activities in daily life.

Similarly, Gus states that though he (Unknown) knows that there is no gas in the room, he (unknown) has sent the matches down. The situation tells us there is neither sense nor purpose in our actions and human life is thus futile.

Gus states that the unknown person from upstairs is playing games with them but doesn't know the causes behind it, like God playing games with humans. The obvious suggestion is that the world is beyond man's knowledge or comprehension due to its infinity and complexity:

Gus: I told you before who owned this place, didn't I? I told you.

(Violently) Well, what's he playing all these games for?

That's what I want to know. What's he doing it for? (1173)

Likewise, the ending of the play seems to be improper and incomplete because the play ends as they look at each other for a long time. If we endeavor to look for a rational and coherent closure, we are bound to be disappointed. It is like seeking to reach for the absolute truth in the world. Pinter ends the play thus:

He is stripped of his jacket, waistcoat, tie, holster, and revolver.

He stops, body stooping, his arms at his side.

He raises his head looks at Ben.

A long silence.

They stare at each other."(1174)

We can also talk about ambiguity at the end of the play. Gus goes out to drink a glass of water through the left door. Then, Ben goes towards the left door to call Gus because Ben has received the kill order. Then the right door opens. So, Ben turns his revolver at that door. Then, the play just say Gus 'stumbles in'. It is ambiguous through which door Gus enters because they the play doesn't talk about the exact door. So, we just keep guessing which door Gus gets in through but can never be sure. Therefore, we just go on looking and looking for the right door perhaps a symbolic way of showing how we have been searching for the absolute truth.

Similarly, Pinter's dialogue seems to go around in circles as if to present the circularity of life. Ben and Gus talk about whether it is correct to say 'light the kettle or light the gas' from 1165 to 1166. Then, they proceed talking about different kinds of subject matter. Once again Ben reminds Gus on 1171 saying that even he (unknown) from the upstairs said 'light the kettle'. In this way, they start talking about a topic. Then they change it and go ahead. And again they come back to discuss the same thing they have left discussing. This shows the incoherent development of ideas and the circularity of life.

Likewise, Pinter has given many grammatically wrong and incomplete sentences to Ben and Gus. Either they are incomplete or grammatically wrong or the words have not been arranged properly. Pinter uses incomplete sentences to convey that life is imperfect and

grammatically wrong/mistaken sentences to express that the world is disordered and incoherent. Thus the presentation of the illogical and incoherent sentences has become the most apt way of showing a universe in disarray.

Pinter has successfully created a complex pattern of poetic images in our mind. The poetic image is such an image which is ambiguous and with multi-variated meanings and difficult to interpret. We can't precisely say what they stand for. In the play, he has presented foolish characters in a dingy and shabby room, who utter incoherent and illogical sentences and indulge in nonsensical activities and foolish talk. All these situations create a pattern of poetic images in our mind which concisely manifests the disharmony and incoherence of the universe.

The play can thus be in the repertoire of absurd theatre which reveals the absurdity of the human condition in an incoherent universe with the two men representing humanity that is groping for a meaning they will never find.

Chapter IV

CONCLUSION

Pinter's *The Dumb Waiter* depicts the futility of existence in an irrational and meaningless universe. Human being is living in a strange and nonsensical world. He tries to find out the meaning or value of life in this universe but cannot discover because the world itself possesses no such value/truth. So, his search for the ultimate truth in this world is futile. Exactly in the same way, the characters Ben and Gus in the play try to find out the transcendental power/truth but cannot. Thus, Pinter through the play exposes that human existence is futile.

Pinter has staged dingy, shabby and disorganized situations to expose the disorder, disharmony and triviality of the universe. So, he presents a ground floor room being attached with the kitchen and the toilet. The room has also two doors. There are two beds in the room. There is a serving hatch between them. He also poses of boy of 11 years standing in a messy and disarrayed tool shed. Such situations have really contributed in expressing his ideas successfully.

He expresses irrationality of human beings through Gus and Ben. So, he presents Gus engaging in nonsensical activities. Gus puts a matchbox and a packet of cigarette inside his shoes. He also lights a matchstick by striking against the shoe. Likewise, he makes Ben engaged in nonsensical and irrational utterances.

Pinter also conveys the idea that there is no super being that comes and helps human being at the moment of the crisis. Like Vladimir and Estragon wait for Godot in *Waiting for Godot*, Ben and Gus also wait for

Wilson for money to fill the gas but Wilson does not come like Godot. Similarly he also presents the view that human reason cannot comprehend the absolute truth of the universe. So, he does not let Ben know the name of the house owner. He also makes Gus unable to know the reasons behind that game of the unknown person. He also presents a letter being sent without the name of the sender.

Similarly, while speaking to the tube, Ben takes it to the mouth to speak and to the ear to listen alternately and repeatedly. At that time he, representing whole human beings, looks like a clown or a fool. Pinter also compels us to have the sense of absurdity when he makes Gus reread Ben's instructions. While Gus repeats Ben's directions, it sounds very ridiculous, farcical, monotonous and irritating.

Similarly, Pinter also deals with the theme of the play through poetic images. By presenting dingy and disarranged room, grotesquely dressed up and irrational characters, illogical and nonsense dialogues, and foolish actions of the characters, he has been successful to create a complex pattern of poetic images which truly reflect the disorder, disharmony and complicated nature of the universe. He also treats the theme of the play through language structures. So, he has applied many grammatically wrong sentences to expose the disorder and chaos of the universe. Similarly, he has employed incomplete sentences to convey that our life is imperfect.

In this way, we can conclude that Pinter, with the presentation of foolish characters, irrational and incoherent, circular and repetitive dialogues, irrational activities of Ben and Gus and shabby and dingy situations, has successfully conveyed the idea that human existence is simply absurd.

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